DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 194 946 CS 503 149

AUTHOR Ostman, Ronald E.; Jeffers, Dennis W.
TITLE The Relationship of Life Stage to Motives for Using Television and the Perceived Reality of TV.
PUB DATE May 80
NOTE 38p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (30th, Acapulco, Mexico, May 18-23, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; *Age; Attitudes; *Behavior Patterns; Individual Characteristics; Models; *Motivation; *Performance Factors; Predictor Variables; *Television Research; *Television Viewing

ABSTRACT

A model specifying relationships between life stage, motives for using television and the perceived reality of television was tested with data from 140 telephone interviews of adults living in Southern Illinois. The adults ranged in age from 18 to 87 years. Life stage was related to five of the 11 motives for using television: learning things, forgetting, overcoming loneliness, passing time when bored, and finding something to talk about. Life stage was correlated positively with the perceived reality of television. Perceived reality of television was correlated positively with motives to use television to learn about self and things, arousal, to find something to talk about, and as a means of overcoming loneliness. These correlations persisted when controlling for other variables. The relatively low magnitude of the correlations and a series of multiple regression analyses suggested that life stage and perceived reality of television accounted for modest percentages of variance in motives for using television. Variables such as life situation and community environment were proposed as potentially powerful additions to the model. (Author/RL)

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF LIFE STAGE TO MOTIVES FOR USING TELEVISION AND THE PERCEIVED REALITY OF TV

Ronald E. Ostman
Assistant Professor
Communication Arts
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York, U.S.A.

and

Dennis W. Jeffers
Assistant Professor
Journalism
Central Michigan University
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, U.S.A.

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A paper presented to the

International Communication Association Meetings.

May 18 to May 23, 1980

Acapulco, Mexico

CS503149

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Ronald E. Ostman[1/] and Dennis W. Jeffers[2/]

1/ Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Arts, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

2/ Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant

Dr. Ostman received the Ph.D. in journalism and mass communication from the University of Minnesota in 1974. He has taught at Bemidji State University and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. He has been a reporter for an urban weekly newspaper in Minneapolis, and has experience in magazine writing, editing, and scholastic journalism. His research interests have centered on the mass media use and perceptions of the mentally ill, the use of mass media in drug education and government regulation of news and advertising.

Dr. Jeffers received the Ph.D. in mass communication from Ohio University in 1976. He has taught at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and has worked six years in nonprofit public relations, public affairs communication, and magazine writing and editing. His research interests include communication behaviors of the mentally ill, organizational communication within human services institutions, and effectiveness in company publications.

Abstract

A model is presented specifying relationships between life stage, motives for using television, and the perceived reality of TV. An April, 1979 random sample of telephone households in the Carbondale, DeSoto and Murphysboro area of Southern Illinois provided 140 interviews with adults aged 18 to 87. Life stage is related to five of 11 motives for using TV (to learn things, to forget, to overcome loneliness, to pass time when bored, and to find something to talk about). Life stage is correlated positively with the perceived reality of TV. Perceived reality of TV is correlated positively with motives to use TV to learn about self and things, arousal, to find something to talk about and as a means of overcoming loneliness. These correlations persist when controlling for other variables. The relatively low magnitude of the correlations and a series of multiple regression analyses suggest that life stage and perceived reality of TV account for modest percentages of variance in motives for using TV. Variables such as life situation and community environment are proposed as potentially powerful additions to the model.

The Relationship of Life Stage to Motives for Using Television and the Perceived Reality of TV

Considerable attention in recent literature has focused on the motives of children for using television and their perceived reality of TV (Greenberg, 1974; Hawkins, 1977; Reeves, 1978; Roberts, 1973; Rubin, 1979). Another concern in the scholarly literature has investigated the role of age as a determinant or correlate of mass media communication behaviors (Bower, 1973; Doolittle, 1979; Kent & Rush, 1976; Lyness, 1951; Schramm, 1973; Schramm & White, 1949; Steiner, 1963). Several investigators consider age to be an important social category to consider when examining consumers' reasons for using mass media, while others believe different types of variables might yield more explanation (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1975; Greenberg & Kumata, 1979; Jackson & Stamm, 1979; Weaver, Wilhoit & Riede, 1979). This paper reports on a study conducted in Southern Illinois which used interview questions asked in several earlier studies with children regarding their motives for using TV and perceived reality of TV. However, the sample questioned in this study consisted of adults ranging in age from 18 to 87 years.

Three research questions are asked: What is the relationship between life stage (age) and motives for viewing television (perceived needs)? What is the relationship between life stage and perceived reality of TV? What is the relationship between perceived reality of TV and motives for using TV?

The Concepts

Life Stage

Age is known to relate to media exposure. While scholars debate whether or not the relationship is spurious, the life cycle seems to relate to TV viewing such that the medium is used more before the age of 35 than during the middle years and then peaks again after age 50 (Schramm, 1973). Doolittle (1979) notes that after age 69, there is a slight decline in TV use. Greenberg and Kumata (1968) also report a curvilinear relationship between age and TV viewing. Kent and Rush (1976) report that 62% of their senior citizen sample watched TV news. The A. C. Nielsen Co. (1979) estimates that women aged 55 years or more watch the most TV (almost 38 hours per week) and that female teens are the lowest viewing group (about 23 1/2 hours per week). Plotting the Nielsen data by age group and number of hours viewed per week shows that the relationship between age and TV viewing is u-shaped in the curvilinear manner suggested by Bower (1973), Greenberg and Kumata (1968), Schramm (1973) and Steiner (1963).

Bower (1973), in replicating Steiner's (1963) study of television and the American public, contrasts two lines of speculation regarding ages of viewers: the "generational theory," which holds that the ideas adopted by young individuals endure as persons grow older, and the "life cycle theory," which states that ideas and attitudes change as the individual matures. Using cohort analysis, Bower concludes that the life cycle theory is better supported than the generational point of view: "people change their views about television as they reach different stages in life. ... things happening early and things happening late in life seem to produce favorable attitudes and something else in the

middle years tends to depress the attitudes a bit" (p 42).

The flexibility of adults' attitudes in various life stages is a matter of considerable concern for scholars and persons in mass communication message production. McGuire (1973), and most recently Doolittle (1979), note than as persons grow older, their attitudes may change as a function of having grown older. Typically, attitudes are said to become more conservative. Also, McGuire notes that as persons age, they become less persuasible. If knowledge and attitudes were not capable of being influenced by media after childhood, there would seem little utility of messages for adolescents and adults other than reinforcement effect. The uses and gratifications perspective (Blumler and Katz, 1974), moreover, would consider the more than 70% of the U. S. population aged 18 years or more (Statistical Abstracts, 1978) as individuals, each using media for unique (though classifiable) gratifications. Concerning whether or not age ought to enable prediction of behavior based on homogeneous groupings, there seems no consensus. On the one hand, DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) note that knowledge of simple variables such as age "provides a reasonably accurate guide to the type of communication content a given individual will or will not select from available media" (p 206), while on the other hand Kent and Rush (1976) claim that "older persons have communication behaviors that don't deviate all that much from those of most of us" (p 46). While Bower (1973) says "television serves quite different functions for (very young and old) age groups, " (p 43) and Weaver et al. (1979) believe that "...people of different ages use television for different purposes," (p 7) others cast age into a secondary role. Greenberg and Kumata (1968) conclude that age and other demographic variables have almost no pre-

dictive value in accounting for media exposure. Kent and Rush (1976) say that education is a more important predictor of knowledge, and Doolittle (1979) believes that while age was a predictor of news media use, socioeconomic factors and sociability may be more important in determining media habits. And while the traditional explanation of regularities in age and mass media channel use described by Schramm (1973) now are seen by some as spurious in that the explanation of these regularities may be due to other variables, at least one recent major study which took a multivariate approach to the analysis of age, traditional demographic variables, and nine "personal needs" variables concluded that personal needs and age were of value in predicting newspaper and TV use among consumers in Indianapolis (Weaver et al., 1979). Still another study found older age to be related to stability in newspaper subscriptions, but concludes that "life setting" variables reflecting the physical and social context of particular communities were the best predictors of stability in newspaper subscribers (Jackson and Stamm, 1979).

The "uses and gratifications" approach to the study of mass communication is in part a reaction against the heavy reliance on "remote" demographic, sociological and personality variables. The emphasis is placed squarely on the consumer of mass media messages and that person's communication behaviors. The emphasis expresses a concern for: "(1) the social and psychological origin of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974, p 14). This

study differs from the uses and gratifications approach in its concern for the possible relationships of a traditional demographic variable (life stage) to needs and perception of media content. Uses and gratifications research to date has not stressed demographics or perceptions of media content. This study is more closely aligned with developmental or "phase" studies as reviewed by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974).

In summary, while age has been found useful in predicting media behavior, and while age is seen by many researchers as a critical developmental variable in explaining the communication behavior of children (Roberts, 1973), the literature is not definitive on the value of age as a variable for predicting and explaining the mass communication behavior of older persons.

Motives for Using TV

Age may be important as a variable in predicting and explaining communication behaviors through its relationship to perceived needs and motives for using the mass media. Graney (1975) carefully distinguishes between two approaches to the concept of "need." The first, which he rejects as inappropriate for communication research, is the "intrinsic, immutable ... ultimate explanation of behavior (through needs)" (p 348). Rather, Graney endorses as more acceptable to communication researchers the study of need as "socially acquired and socially expressed" (p 348). The needs discussed below generally fall into the latter approach.

An early discussion of the relationship between the person's needs and the use of mass media in order to satisfy these needs is found in Gans (1957), where it is argued that the latent needs and predispositions of various groups within the mass audience permits the creators of messages

to predict patterns (with some trepidation, of course) in consumer preferences for entertainment message content. One important group characteristic (in this case related to movie-going decisions), Gans points out, is age. Gans says: "The audience for each movie can be classified into a large number of publics, each public being an aggregate of people who have made a choice with the same predisposition, or set of related predispositions" (p 316).

A similar approach to uses and gratifications can be found in Jeffres (1975), who discusses "functions" instead of needs and distinquishes between "media-seeking" and "content-seeking."

A review of 120 research studies published in four leading mass communications journals between 1955 and 1977 on the uses and effects of newspapers and television documents wide variations in both uses and reasons for using these media (Weaver & Buddenbaum, 1979). Three major uses for newspapers and television outlined: for knowledge, for diversion, and as an adjunct to interpersonal communication. Other investigators also speculate as to what persons' motives might be for using mass media. The resulting lists of motives and perceived needs range from rather abbreviated classificatory schemes, such as the three-fold scheme above to extensive checklists, such as the 15 reasons for watching TV enumerated by Steiner (1963) and Bower (1973).[1] DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) mention three needs which can be satisfied by mass media: to understand the world, to act meaningfully, and to have fantasy and escape from daily problems. Schramm (1973), discussing age related to media channels, notes at least five needs of older persons: to counteract loneliness and social disengagement; increased value of wisdom; changing role patterns; declining vitality; and content changes in media messages. Doolittle (1979 discusses seven

reasons why older persons may have special news media uses: increased leisure; failing auditory and visual capabilities; dwindling interpersonal contacts; need to keep up with society; nature of the program content; expense; and growing conservativism. Weaver et al. (1979) spell out nine personal needs: to keep tabs on what's going on around oneself; to relax and release tension; to kill time; to avoid feeling lonely; to get to know oneself better; for entertainment; to have an influence on things going on around oneself; to plan one's day; and to find out what other people are saying about things that are important to oneself. Greenberg (1974), using factor analysis to find major sets of reasons for watching TV among British youth, discusses seven clusters: for learning, as a habit, for arousal, for companionship, to relax, to forget, and to pass time. Using the same television use scales as Greenberg (1974), Rubin (1979) finds with U. S. children and adolescents, as Greenberg had with British schoolchildren and youth, that age is a consistent demographic correlate with the entire range of viewing motivations. Sex, race and social class were less consistent.

Still other lists of motives, reasons, functions and needs (the terminology varies from investigator to investigator) exist. A central summary of many major theorists' approaches can be found in Blumler and Katz (1974). While the length of the lists may vary, a central assumption seems to be shared by most of the writers, as Roberts (1973) notes succinctly:

> "... what anyone, child or adult, brings to and takes from a communication situation is a function of any number of factors which determine each person's needs and capabilities, needs and capabilities that differ from one person to the next and that may

undergo change within any individual from one time to the next" (p 185).[2]

Perceived Reality of TV

Roberts (1973), discussing the emotional responses of children to violence in media messages, notes that older children develop an "adult discount," which enables the child "to distinguish clearly between reality and fantasy" in media content while the younger child "is more likely to be frightened by stressful scenes" (p 196). A general hypothesis advanced is that childrens' age is inversely related to perceived reality of TV.

Several investigators have advanced the empirical fund of knowledge concerning the perceived reality of TV among children and adults (Donohue & Donohue, 1977; Hawkins, 1977; Klapper, 1978; Ostman, Jeffers, Skelton & Meyer, 1979; Ostman, Jeffers & Skelton, 1979). Perceived reality of TV is believed to be a multidimensional concept. It includes the dimension of "magic window ... through which one can look at on-going life" and "social expectations," whether or not TV characters and events meet viewers' "expectations about life and the world around them, ranging from not fitting with their expectations to fitting very well with expectations" (Hawkins & Pingree, 1977, p 2). This dimension also includes how useful TV characters and events are in guiding personal behavior. If TV is seen as real by children, the effects on attitudes, and role definitions, social expectations and other behaviors are thought to be consistent with the content of the TV message, whether pro- or anti-social (Klapper, 1978; Reeves, 1978). Studies of the concept as measured using samples of children from nursery school to sixth grade age show an "adult discount" on the magic window dimension (Hawkins, 1977). The social expectations

dimension persists into adulthood (Caughey, 1978; Ostman et al., 1979). Several studies which examine the concept as related to adults find higher levels of belief in reality of TV among mentally ill-labeled adults than among nonlabeled adults (Ostman et al., 1979).

A Working Model

A brief model depicting how the concepts may be interrelated in a general sense follows (Figure 1).

Figure 1 about here.

In this model, since life stage is evolving, and cannot be manipulated for any individual, it is considered an independent variable. Motives for using TV and the perceived reality of TV will vary from individual to individual, but are held to depend partially upon the person's life stage. They are considered intervening variables in this model. Not shown in the model, but assumed due to the high level of TV adoption in American households (97% of U. S. homes contain at least one television set; Statistical Abtracts, 1978) and A. C. Nielsen Co. data (1979) (suggesting that the TV set in the average home is on for almost 6 1/4 hours daily), is that most individuals will view TV content on a regular basis in order to gratify some personal need or needs. The final step in the model, gratifications obtained from the use of TV, is not measured. It can be considered the dependent variable, or the effect of TV viewing. However, in another sense, the gratifications obtained from TV may in turn affect subsequent motives for using TV and perceived reality of TV, as depicted in the feedback loops (broken lines) in the model. It may also affect subsequent TV viewing time, type of viewing and gratifications sought from TV viewing.

To illustrate this model, suppose a very old person was lonely because many friends had died and because it was difficult to make new friends because of decrements in levels of physical activity and because of physical mobility problems.[3] This person may view a lot of TV just to hear human voices and to experience a sense of companionship (Graney & Graney, 1974). In this case, the elderly person may perceive certain favorite TV personalities (Archie & Edith Bunker, Alice, Dr. Hardy, for example) as either real persons or persons who are quite like real persons as experienced previously. A gratification associated with such TV exposure might be an increased feeling of companionship. This gratification could affect future TV viewing. For example, it might reinforce several motives for using TV -- to pass time or viewing as a habit. It may be that the more a person views and identifies with a fictional TV character, the more real that character becomes in the person's perception over time.

Hypotheses

One research question asks: What is the relationship between life stage (age) and motives for viewing television (perceived needs)? Hypotheses related to this question are: as age increases, (a) there will be more motivation to learn from television, especially about things, but less about self; (b) there will be more motivation to pass time by watching television; (c) television viewing will be habitual; (d) the person will consider TV viewing to provide companionship; (e) the person will express less motivation to view TV as a means of forgetting what he or she is doing; (f) there will be less motivation to watch TV for arousal; (g) the person will express less motivation to watch TV in order to relax; (h) the person will attach less importance to TV viewing

as a means of finding something to talk about with others; (i) the person will attach more importance to use of TV as a means of overcoming loneliness; and (j) less importance will be attributed to TV as a form of entertainment.

Another research question asks: What is the relationship between life stage and perceived reality of TV? It is hypothesized that the relationship between age and perceived reality of TV will be u-shaped (curvilinear). TV will be perceived as more real earlier and later in the life stages than during the middle years.

The final research question concerns the relationship between motives for using TV and the perceived reality of TV. It is hypothesized that the correlations will be positive.

The level of significance to reject the null hypotheses of no relationships implied by the alternative hypotheses above is set at the .05 level.

Rationale for Hypotheses

Generally speaking, the research study which has best addresses the research question concerning the relationship of life stage to motives for using TV is the Weaver et al. (1979) study. However, this study is concerned with use of mass media in general and does not focus on TV unless the respondent singled out TV as particularly appropriate for a given personal need. In reconstructing the Weaver et al. data by age alone, a murky pattern of media use by personal need emerges. The only linear relationship detected is between age and using media for keeping tab on what's going on (older persons tend to use media more than younger persons for satisfying this need). The other relationships tend to be nonlinear. Overall, Weaver et al. do not report radically different rank

orderings of personal needs by age group.

Concerning the possible use of TV as a means of learning, either about things or about self, Neugarten (1979) reviews literature which discusses the increased tendency for human development of wisdom with advancing age. An important theoretical notion advanced by Neugarten is the concept of "interiority," or "a change from outer-world to inner-world orientation" among older persons (p 892). Maslow (1970) discusses wisdom as a higher order need, sought only when more basic needs are satisfied (gratified). Schramm (1973) says older persons "come to value wisdom more" (p 133). Davis (1971) finds the three top choices selected by older adults from a list of 10 to be news and public affairs, educational programs, and travelogues. Their favorite program choices also were classified as to the top three choices. These were news and public affairs, music and drama. Davis notes that "the older adult ... indicated a desire to 'keep up with things,' (but) they indicate that much of what they are offered on television is irrelevant and not pertinent to their lives" (p 157). TV may broaden one's horizon about "things," but would not seem to be an especially good contributor to learning about oneself, which requires contemplative intellectuality.

Concerning the increased tendency for older persons to use TV more as a pastime or as a habit than younger persons, this theme is suggested by Schramm (1973). Weaver et al. (1979) believe that "television may be better at helping young and older people pass time than at entertaining them" (p 2). A strong predictor in their study is time spent with TV each day and older adults' need to kill time."

Graney and Graney (1974) point out that aging brings "inevitable changes" which require adaptation. They note that previous studies found

that "attention to the media of mass communication is the chief leisure activity of the aged" (p 89). Their study, however, generally finds that the elderly did not use TV as a substitution for other activities; rather, positive correlations were found between TV use and the use of telephone, as well as attending meetings. However, in a later report, Graney (1975) reports that declines in frequency of attending religious services "were often met by increased television use" (p 361). Graney (1975) summarizes his research, saying: "Television use seems to be a substitute of last resort for the older people ... and appears to rest at the end of a chain of communication behavior exchanges that are experienced in aging" (p 363).

Increased leisure becomes a dominant characteristic of advanced age in the U. S., according to Doolittle (1979). This implies there is less to get away from and to forget when one is older than when one was younger.

No reference was found in the literature related to the need for arousal as one grows older. The increased "inner-world" drift of the older person suggested by Neugarten (1979) would suggest less, rather than more, need for arousal from outside stimuli.

The same rationale applies to life stage and the need to relax as was advanced for the need for forgetting. The elderly probably have less need to relax than younger persons.

Kent and Rush (1976) find media exposure to be independent of interpersonal communication. They also find a slight positive relationship between TV exposure and not getting out to visit friends. Doolittle (1979), however, finds a positive correlation between interpersonal communication and rate of news consumption. However, with his sample re-

cruited from senior citizen centers, he finds no correlation between age and interpersonal communication. In general, however, there are fewer persons for the elderly to talk to and older TV viewers may be more dependent on TV "because of restricted mobility and solitude" (Bower, 1973, p 44). Davis (1971) finds that 63.3% of the older persons surveyed recognized the "companionship service of television" (p 155).

Schramm (1973) believes that TV is important after a person retires, because it serves in part "to counteract the sense of loneliness and disengagement that comes when people are no longer with their work groups and many of their friends" (p 133).

Citing Steiner's (1963) data, Schramm (1973) shows a steadily increasing proportion of viewers who select information programs over entertainment as the age of the group increases. Schramm and White (1949) demonstrated the same tendency in newspaper content reading preferences.

The literature on perceived reality of TV among children shows a deterioration in the belief of TV as a magic window on life as the child ages. However, elderly persons may come to see TV characters as more real when they lack an interpersonal basis with which to compare the TV content. Valins and Nisbett (1972), discussing "attribution," or the way in which persons explain their worlds, note that the individual "often uses a social consensus as a criterion for validating his explanations" (p 137). However, a problem arises with some persons, because they do not have contact with others against which to check evaluations, interpretations, and so on. Valins and Nisbett, though not discussing the elderly, outline a plight often experienced by the elderly:

> "It is thus apparent that effective social comparison often <u>cannot</u> take place, even though the individual might desire it or benefit

from it. Effective social comparison is impossible when there are no individuals available who could provide adequate information and unlikely when the comparison process is painful" (p 138). That the mass media might fill this interpersonal communication void is suggested by Valins and Nisbett, who cite soap opera characters, magazine articles, medical columns and other potential sources of "expert opinion."

Hess (1974) states the Valins-Nisbett argument in terms directly relating to the elderly:

> "Old people are less likely than younger ones, or than themselves at younger ages, to be involved in ongoing webs of primary relationships; consequently they are more likely to receive media messages without the opportunity to test the validity of such inputs through conversation with others. Thus the 'social construction of reality,' whereby interacting individuals build a world of meaning which makes sense of their separate experiences and allows a degree of mastery over the environment, becomes more problematical for old people ... than for those in a number of primary groups" (p 82).

Finally, previous studies by Greenberg (1974), Ostman et al. (1979) and Rubin (1979) report positive correlations between motives for using TV and the perceived reality of TV. These studies have sampled both children and adults and there is no reason to suspect findings would be different in this research.

Methodology

Operationalizing the Concepts

As a measure of life stage, the person's age in years at last birthday was used.

To measure the person's motives for using TV, representative items developed and tested by Greenberg (1974), and later Rubin (1979), were used, either directly or in slightly modified form in order to be appropriate for adults. The respondent was told that these were "some reasons that other people gave me for watching TV" and was asked to tell how much the reasons were like his or her own reasons:

1. I watch TV because it relaxes me.
2. I watch TV when there's no one to be with or to talk to.
3. I watch TV because it teaches me things I don't learn elsewhere.
4. I watch TV because I just like to watch.
5. I watch TV when I'm bored.
6. I watch TV so I could learn about what could happen to me.
7. I watch TV because it's thrilling.
8. I watch TV so I can get away from what I'm doing.

The response categories for these items were: a lot like my own reason, a little like my own reason, not much like my own reason, not at all like my own reason.

Three questions were asked about the importance of TV to the respondent. The response categories were: very important, important, not sure or don't know, unimportant, very unimportant:

1. How important is it to you to watch TV so that you will find something to talk about with others in Southern Illinois?
2. How important is it to you to watch TV to overcome loneliness?
3. How important is it to you to watch TV just for entertainment?

To measure the person's perceived reality of TV, three statements were read to respondents and they were asked to tell the interviewer if the statements were true all of the time, true most of the time, true

some of the time, or not true. The statements were (Rubin, 1979):

1. Television presents things as they really are in life.
2. Television lets me see how other people live.
3. Television lets me see what happens in other places as if I were really there.

Data also were collected on respondent's sex, race, occupation, education, favorite TV programs, and amount of TV exposure.

The Sample

In April, 1979, a random sample of household telephone numbers was drawn from the Carbondale, DeSoto and Murphysboro telephone book of Southern Illinois. After a pretest of an open- and close-end survey instrument, advanced undergraduate communications students taking a communication theory and research methods course at Southern Illinois University interviewed 140 persons aged 18 years or older by telephone, a completion rate of 63.9%. Telephoning was done during the day and early evening. Interviewers made three callbacks before abandoning a busy or not-at-home number. All interviews, which lasted from 10 to 25 minutes, were completed within a three day period. The refusal rate was 19.2% of the total attempts and 23.1% of the numbers reached. Not-at-home numbers accounted for 9.1% of the calls attempted. The remaining 7.8% of the numbers attempted were disconnected or out-of-service. The sampling error associated with the completed telephone numbers is $\pm$ 8.28%. No attempt should be made to generalize these findings to the American adult population at a whole.

Results

Sample Characteristics

Ages of the sample ranged from 18 to 87 years, with a mean age of

35 years, a standard deviation of 18.16, a mode of 22, and median of 26.9. Fifty-five percent of the sample was female. Hollinghead's (1965) index of social position was used to classify the exact occupation (or previous occupation) of the respondent. This classification has seven levels, ranging from the highest level of higher executives, proprietors of large concerns and major professionals to the lowest level, unskilled employees. Eleven percent of the sample were classified into the top class, followed by 9.6% in the second class, 46.3% in the third, 9.6% in the fourth, 8.8% in the fifth, 10.3% in the sixth, and 4.4% in the lowest class. Concerning the level of education of the respondents, 12.2% held graduate degrees, 15.1% had a college degree, 44.6% reported partial college training, 18% were high school graduates, 5.8% stated they had some high school education, and 4.3% reported they had completed junior high school. Whites accounted for 91.4% of the sample. Blacks constituted 5.8% and those of other races made up 2.7% of the sample.

Television Viewing Attachment and Perceptions

Respondents reported on two aspects of their television viewing behaviors. First, they were asked to give an estimate of how many hours they spent watching TV on the day prior to the interview. Estimates ranged from "none" to eight hours, with a mean of 1.96 and a standard deviation of 1.67. Second, respondents reported on how many hours of TV they viewed on an average weekday. Estimates ranged from "none" to ten hours, with a mean of 2.7 and a standard deviation of 1.67. When combined in an index, the reliability of these two items was an alpha of .82.

Concerning their degree of attachment to TV, respondents were asked to state whether the statement "If the television wasn't working, I'd really miss it" was "true all of the time," "true most of the time,"

"true some of the time" or "not true." Those who were very attached to their televisions accounted for 15.7% of the sample. Those moderately attached constituted 18.6% of the sample. Many persons were mildly attached (47.9%). Almost 18% (17.9%) said the statement was not true.

Three questions concerning the respondents' perceptions of the reality of TV were combined into a scale with a score ranging from 12 (highly realistic) to 3 (not realistic at all). The mean score was 5.92 with a standard deviation of 1.66, a mode of 6 and median of 5.77. The reliability of this three-item scale was an alpha of .52.

An open-end question regarding the respondent's reasons for viewing TV was asked very early in the interview. The primary responses were classified using the scheme devised by Greenberg (1974) and Rubin (1979). The most popular response was for entertainment (31.4%), followed by learning things (21.9%); to pass time (17.5%); for relaxation (16.1%); as a habit (2.9%); for companionship (1.5%); to forget (1.5%) and to find something to talk about with others (0.7%). Other responses not handled by this classification system accounted for the remaining 6.6% of the total.

Respondents were also asked to list their three favorite TV programs. The first named program was coded into one of 10 categories. The favorite TV program type identified was news and public affairs (28.5%), followed by comedy (27.7%); adventure and drama (15.3%); adult educational (7.3%); daytime serials (5.8%); sports (5.1%); music-variety (3.6%); movies (2.2%); and game shows (1.5%). Programs named which could not be classified accounted for 2.9% of the responses.

Hypotheses Tests

Table 1 summarizes the zero order correlations between life stage, the perceived reality of television and the motives for using television.

Table 1 about here

Life Stage and Motives for Watching TV

Age was related to three motives for watching TV in the direction predicted. The correlations were: with learning things, +.20 (p=.009); to forget, -.17 (p=.023); and with loneliness, +.18 (p=.018). However, statistically significant relationships with age were found in opposite than predicted directions for two motives for viewing TV: to pass time when bored, -.19 (p=.012) and to find something to talk about with others, +.24 (p=.003). In the predicted direction, but not statistically significant, were correlations between age and watching TV to relax and to learn about self. In opposite of the predicted direction, but not statistically significant, were correlations between age and viewing TV as a habit and viewing for arousal. Relationships between age and viewing for companionship or for entertainment are best described as random.

Life Stage and Perceived Reality of TV

The correlation between age and the three-item scale measuring perceived reality of TV was +.28 (p=.001). Because a curvilinear, u-shaped relationship was expected, the data were plotted in a scattergram for inspection. Also, cross-tabulations using age groups were inspected. The relationship essentially was linear. As age increased, the perceived reality of TV tended to increase. However, greater polarization toward the ends of the perceived reality of TV continuum were observed for the

oldest respondents.

Motives for Using TV and Perception of the Reality of TV

Table 1 shows that five of the 11 correlations between motives for using TV and the perceived reality of TV are statistically significant in the predicted positive direction. These are between the perceived reality of TV and learning about things (+.31; p =.000); learning about self (=.20; p =.014); arousal (+.27; p =.000); to find something to talk about with others (+.27; p =.001); and as a means of overcoming loneliness (+.22; p =.007). Two correlations were in the predicted positive direction but were not statistically significant: perceived reality of TV with viewing as a habit (+.08; p =.190), and perceived reality of TV with viewing for entertainment (+.14; p =.065). Four correlations between motives for viewing TV and the perceived reality of TV are best described as random: to relax, for companionship, to pass time, and to forget.

Partial correlations were calculated for all statistically significant zero order correlations, controlling for the individual variables of education, socioeconomic status, sex, TV exposure, occupation, TV attachment, and race. In the vast majority of results, the correlations observed in zero order state remained statistically significant in the same direction as partials. In four instances where partialling caused a statistically significant zero order correlation to become nonsignificant as a partial, three-way cross-tabulations of the variables were inspected for an explanation. For the educated young, viewing TV to overcome loneliness was not important. Elderly persons who were very attached to their televisions tended to use TV to overcome loneliness. Less educated persons tended to perceive TV as more real and those who perceived TV as realistic tended to use TV more to learn about themselves. Also, those

with more education and lower levels of perceived TV realism tended to report less motivation to view TV in order to overcome loneliness.

Additional analyses were used. Greenberg and Kumata (1968) pointed out the value of multivariate analyses in communications research, cautioning researchers against making explanations concerning media usage based on single variables or bivariate analyses. Table 2 summarizes the results of multiple regression analyses in order to gauge the relative predictive importance of perceived TV reality and age, as well as demographic, behavioral and attitudinal variables on the individual motives for using TV.

Table 2 about here

The results of these multiple regression analyses tend to indicate that all of the variables considered in this study provide slight to moderate prediction of the motives to use TV. The most variance explained was for using TV to find something to talk to others about (26.4%) and the least was for using TV in order to relax (8.97%). Among the variables used as independent variables in the stepwise inclusion procedures, age was the best predictor in three of the 11 analyses, while the perceived reality of TV was the best predictor in two of the 11 analyses. However, generally speaking, the independent amount of variance explained by these two predictors is tiny (see RSQ change columns). (It should be noted that while perceived reality of TV is used as a predictor in these equations, the general model presented earlier characterizes the relationship between this variable and the motives for viewing TV as reciprocal).

A separate multiple regression, using age, race, sex, occupation,

education, television exposure, television attachment and all the motives for using television to predict the degree of perceived reality of TV showed that these predictors accounted for 27.4% of the variance. The predictor which explained the most variance was the motivation to use TV in order to talk to others (7%), followed by the motivation to use TV for arousal (5.6%) and age (4.7%). The following variables explained less than one percent of the variance: motivations to use TV for relaxation, as a habit, for companionship, to pass time, for entertainment; education; occupation; race; extent of TV exposure; and degree of attachment to TV.

Conclusions

Within the methodological limitations of using only a cross-sectional sample in order to infer the effects of a variable concerning the aging process, (Graney & Graney, 1974)[4], some general conclusions can be drawn about the importance of life stage as related to motivational and perceptual variables concerning television.

In accord with expectations derived from the literature, it appears that the older the person, the more the person is motivated to watch TV in order to learn things, and to overcome loneliness, but the less the person is motivated to watch TV in order to get away from what he or she is doing. However, in opposition to expectations, older persons seem less motivated to watch TV to pass time when bored and more motivated to watch TV to find something to talk about with others. Thus, the TV viewing of the older person seems actively motivated in "positive" directions to gratify needs which seek to keep the person active socially and intellectually. While this type of person may use TV because of loneliness, he or she does not seem motivated to seek diversion, escape

or arousal experiences from the set.

Older persons surveyed tended to perceive television content as more realistic than did younger persons. Earlier researchers found that children and early adolescents tend to develop an "adult discount" of TV reality. This research indicated that within the range of the 18 to 87 year olds, the "adult discount" does not increase. Instead, there is a linear tendency for increasing adult acceptance that television presents things as they really are in life, shows how other people live, and shows what happens in other places as if the person were there. There is a tendency for perceptions to polarize (strongly believe, strongly disbelieve) regarding the realism of TV at a very advanced stage of life, however. This may suggest, as the person grows older and experiences more facets of life, that there are fewer and fewer surprises when the unusual occurs or is depicted in media. The epigrams "There is nothing new under the sun" and "Truth is stranger than fiction" increasingly may be believed. Thus, when some character, setting or activity is presented on TV, it may be perceived as outlandish and strange to the younger person. However, the older person may be able to better "connect" that portrayal to some actual life experience as a function of having experienced more in life. This, of course, does not imply that the older person approves in any way of what is depicted.

The more real a TV program is perceived to be, the more the person is motivated to use TV in order to learn about self and other things, for arousal, to find something to talk about, and to overcome loneliness. These motivations can evaluated as "active" and "positive." That is, the use of media for these gratifications can be conceived of as beneficial to the individual. On the other hand, perceived reality of TV does not

seem to be related to more "passive" motives for viewing TV -- as a habit, to relax, for companionship, to pass time, and to forget.

In retrospect, this study has found some support for those who would argue that life stage is related to some important concepts which form the focus of the "uses and gratifications" approach to communication theory. But while it found relationships which were statistically significant, often the amount of variance explained by the correlations was very low to modest. This is an indicator that other concepts are missing from the model. In this study, we have looked at variables of different types -- behavioral, demographic, attitudinal, perceptual. The unit of analysis was clearly focused on the individual and his/her interaction with a major mass medium and other persons. Future studies should perhaps focus on community variables, such as those studied by Jackson and Stamm (1979), in which life setting variables provided more explanation of stable newspaper subscribers than did life stage or life style variables. Using Mortensen's (1972) classification system, we are proposing that in addition to intrapersonal and interpersonal systems of communication, that fruitful concepts in providing more explanation of the phenomena might be found in the sociocultural system (situational, social, institutional and culturally defined patterns of behavior).

Figure 1. Model Depicting interrelationships of concepts.

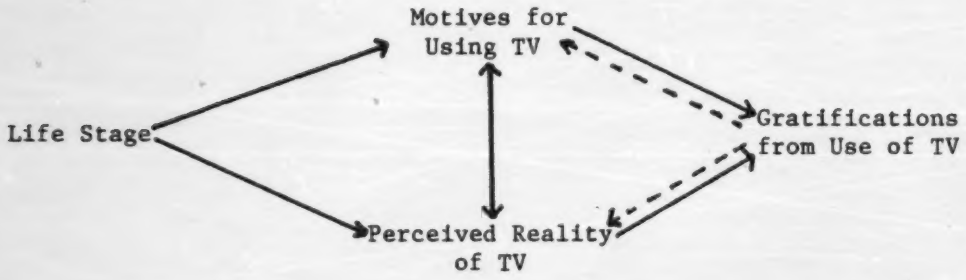

Table 1. Zero Order Pearson Product Moment Correlations and Level of Significance for Variables in Model. Correlations shown in upper diagonal; level of significance shown in lower diagonal.*

	Age	Motives for Using TV											TV Reality
		Relax	Companion	Learn Things	Habit	Pass Time	Learn Self	Arousal	Forget	Talk/Others	Loneliness	Entertainment	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	X	-.06	.01	.20	-.11	-.19	.10	.06	-.17	.24	.18	.02	.28
2	.26	X	.15	.02	.26	.14	.07	.10	.30	-.08	.16	.27	-.03
3	.46	.04	X	.02	.20	.47	.10	.20	.34	.16	.43	.01	.03
4	.01	.39	.39	X	.02	-.05	.44	.25	-.02	.27	.01	.13	.31
5	.10	.00	.01	.40	X	.29	.17	.37	.30	.04	.23	.42	.08
6	.01	.05	.00	.30	.00	X	.12	.23	.44	.01	.35	.27	-.02
7	.13	.22	.12	.00	.03	.07	X	.24	.08	.26	.09	.09	.20
8	.25	.12	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00	X	.15	.11	.28	.35	.34
9	.02	.00	.00	.43	.00	.00	.19	.04	X	.06	.19	.18	-.01
10	.00	.18	.03	.00	.31	.44	.00	.10	.24	X	.20	-.01	.27
11	.02	.03	.00	.43	.00	.00	.14	.00	.01	.01	X	.24	.22
12	.42	.00	.43	.07	.00	.00	.14	.00	.01	.43	.00	X	.14
13	.00	.36	.37	.00	.19	.42	.01	.00	.45	.00	.01	.07	X

* Pairwise deletion used for variables with missing data. Ns vary slightly from correlation to correlation. Most correlations are based on 137 or 138 pairs. Correlations and levels of significance are rounded up.

Table ?. Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses of Selected Demographic, Attitudinal, Perceptual and Behavioral Predictors* of Motives for Using Television.#

Motives for Using TV	R^2	Variance Explained	Best Predictor	RSQ Change	TVREAL RSQ Ch.	AGE RSQ Ch.
Relax	.30	8.97%	Age	2.6%	1.72%	--
Companion	.46	21.5%	TV Attach	14.3%	0.66%	3.96%
Learn Things	.33	11.2%	TV Real	6.9%	--	0.15%
Habit	.42	17.6%	Age	7.6%	2.55%	--
Pass Time	.40	15.9%	Education	5.5%	0.18%	4.20%
Learn Self	.15	14.8%	Occupation	10.2%	1.18%	2.20%
Arousal	.45	20.5%	TV Real	6.9%	--	3.80%
Forget	.40	15.8%	Age	7.1%	2.40%	--
Talk/Others	.51	26.4%	Occupation	10.2%	4.30%	0.09%
Loneliness	.42	17.9%	Education	8.2%	0.32%	**
Entertainment	.39	15.5%	TV Attach	9.3%	0.04%	0.54%

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* The predictors in these multiple regression analyses were: age, sex, occupation, education, race (demographics); perceived reality of television (perceptual); attachment to television (attitudinal); and extent of exposure to television (behavioral).

** Age was not entered into this regression equation because it did not meet the default statistical requirements of the SPSS forward stepwise inclusion procedure. See Norman H. Nie et al., SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., second edition, 1975), pp. 320-367.

All percentages and R^2 have been rounded up.

NOTES

1. These reasons include: to see specific program, pleasant way to spend an evening, to see special program heard a lot about, feel like watching, can learn something, spouse is interested, nothing else to do, keep me company, get away from daily cares and problems, to be sociable, start on one show and get stuck for rest of evening, afraid to miss something good, others will watch and I want to be able to talk about it afterwards, for background when doing something else, to put off doing something else.
2. On the length of lists, Maslow (1970) observes regarding the proliferation of lists concerning human drives: "If we wished, we could have such a list of drives contain anywhere from one to one million drives, depending entirely on the specificity of analysis. ... all the lists of drives that have ever been published seem to imply mutual exclusiveness among the various drives. But there is not mutual exclusiveness" (p 26).
3. The model is oversimplified and confined to the concepts discussed earlier. The illustration demonstrates the inadequacy of the model as a complete explanation of the phenomena -- a complete model should also include interpersonal and social groups and communication, societal constraints, cultural mores, etc. As an example of such an elaborated general schema, see DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) pp 276-280.
4. From a methodological point of view, it is important that the Graneys used a panel survey approach, tracing the activities of a small number of elderly women at two points in time with a four year interval between. Most studies on aging and mass media use have been cross-

sectional rather than longitudinal (Davis, 1971), or have employed different samples at different points in time as a means of making cohort estimations (Bower, 1973).

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